

# Media Release

19 August 2025

## **Turtle Tracker training sessions recruit volleys vital for annual nesting season patrols**

Protecting wildlife for future generations is the motivation for Turtle Tracker volunteers Brian and Janet Bell of Atwell.

As the annual nesting season for female Southwestern Snake-Necked Turtles (*Chelodina oblonga*) approaches, the Bells have called on fellow wildlife lovers to share their passion for Cockburn's unique environment.

The pair began volunteering their services as Turtle Trackers about four years ago and said the satisfaction of learning the correct way to safeguard the local reptiles while they were at their most vulnerable was "highly satisfying".

"These turtles were here long before us and we all live in their environment, so it's a guaranteed 'warm fuzzy' for us to help them thrive in the habitats we all value, such as the wetlands and lakes of Cockburn," Brian said.

"Some of these habitats are close to our homes and the roads we drive on so being able to help the turtles continue to carry out their natural behaviours keeps our communities rich, healthy and diverse."

Brian and Janet have been regular volunteers with Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions native animal surveys for about 14 years.

They said there was a right and wrong way to help local turtles and the best way to learn was to attend the City's Turtle Tracker training sessions.

The pair attended a community information session last week to share their own experiences. Two training sessions are planned for 30 August and 3 September. Register to attend the free sessions on the City's [website](#).

"People don't need any prior experience but they must be open to hearing from the experts about how to protect the turtles and then act on that advice," Brian said.

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“Turtle Trackers are sentinels, watching over turtles as they go about their natural behaviour. Touching them is the last resort. We keep dangers at bay so they can continue to play their part in the local ecosystem.

“It has been encouraging to see recent turtle population studies at Harmony Lake show the local turtle population is faring better than in some of our other lakes.

“While common threats, like road safety, remain a concern, we’re eager to understand what’s contributing to this positive trend.”

City of Cockburn Environmental Education Officer Vicky Hartill said Turtle Tracker volunteers may sometimes need to venture out in rainy, stormy weather as that was when females often left the water in search of soft sand to lay their eggs.

“We encourage anyone who is curious about helping our turtles to come to a future training session. There is so much to be gained for our turtles and our communities, and from a lot of great people already involved, like Brian and Janet.”

Despite recent changes to funding for the Saving Our Snake-Necked Turtle (SOSNT) program, the City remains committed to supporting the vital citizen science initiative, which began as a pilot at Bibra Lake in 2019.

The program has since expanded to include Manning Lake, Eco Park, Yangebup Lake and Market Garden Swamp.

The City’s turtle conservation efforts also include annual monitoring of turtle populations to assess the effectiveness of conservation efforts, habitat restoration through revegetation at City-managed wetlands, and fox control.

The City’s annual budget for fox control has increased from \$20,000 to \$50,000 for 2025-26. The City has provided an additional \$40,000 for the Perth South West Metropolitan Alliance’s Fox Monitoring and Targeted Control Project.

## **What should you do if you see a turtle on the move:**

- They are not lost – if they need help, be a turtle bodyguard
- Drive slowly around wetlands
- Protect them from predators. It is best to keep your distance, but wave off ravens and other birds if they are attacking



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- Take any injured turtles to WA Wildlife, 172 Hope Road, Bibra Lake
- Keep a box and towel in your car for turtle season
- Log sightings on the [TurtleSAT](#) website
- Keep dogs on a leash around wetlands.

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